

White Sands National Monument P.O. Box 1086 Holloman AFB, NM 88330

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White Sands National Monument Frequently Asked Questions Regarding World Heritage Site Nomination

Q: What are World Heritage Sites, and why are they important?

A: World Heritage Sites are areas recognized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Conservation Organization, to, "encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity." This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972."

Q: Whose ideas created the World Heritage Convention?

A: The idea of combining conservation of cultural sites with natural areas comes from the United States. A White House Conference held in 1965 called for a 'World Heritage Trust' to encourage international cooperation to protect natural and cultural areas, "for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry." The Convention was written in October 1972, with the United States taking a lead role in its development. On March 28, 1973, President Richard Nixon in a <u>Statement to the Senate</u>, urged ratification of the Convention. The United States was the first country to sign the treaty in November 1973.

Q: What role does UNESCO or the United Nations (UN) play in the management, jurisdiction or control of a World Heritage Site?

A: According to Article 4 of the Convention,

"Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in <u>Articles 1</u> and <u>2</u> and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State."

Q: What is the story about a buffer zone around Yellowstone National Park and UN involvement?

A: More than a decade ago, during the Clinton Presidency, a proposal to mine gold near the boundary of Yellowstone National Park was discussed. At the time, some asserted the mining proposal included provisions that would allow for a buffer zone around the park as part of an agreement with multinational firms that would cede operational authority. No basis for those claims were ever established and the Clinton Administration denied the permits for the mining operation.

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Q: Why is the National Park Service pursuing a nomination?

A: We are pursuing nomination and inscription as a World Heritage Site for White Sands to gain international recognition for a unique and spectacular resource. We also feel this recognition could lead to increased visitation by international and domestic visitors.

Q: Besides Yellowstone National Park, are there other places in the US that have been designated World Heritage Sites?

A: Yes, there are 20 World Heritage Sites within the US, including the Statue of Liberty and Independence Hall. New Mexico has three World Heritage Sites: Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Chaco Culture National Historical Park and Taos Pueblo. Others in the Southwest include Mesa Verde and Rocky Mountain National Parks in Colorado, and Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

Q: If White Sands is inscribed as a World Heritage Site, how will operations be affected at Holloman AFB and White Sands Missile Range?

A: Operations at both installations will see no effects from designation. Since the activities of both bases do not affect the natural resources or protection of White Sands, and neither UNESCO or the World Heritage Centre have no jurisdiction over the Monument, operations of the bases would not be affected.

Q: Does Holloman or White Sands Missile Range endorse the National Park Service nomination for World Heritage recognition?

A: Yes, we have received a letter of support from White Sands Missile Range. Holloman AFB is studying the issue and has neither endorsed nor opposed the nomination. Letters of support have also been received from New Mexico Senators Domenici and Bingaman, State Representative Gloria Vaughn, Mayors William Mattiace of Las Cruces and Donald Carroll of Alamogordo, and the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce.